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Essential Words in Henry Fielding's Comedies (I)

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I. Introduction

Henry Fielding wrote twenty-five plays in his life, which contain twelve comedies, one comedy and tragedy (not a tragicomedy), seven farces, two tragedies and three plays of no particular kind. Almost all the plays were written in his twenties.

In this essay I am going to treat the contextual meanings of words, especially, 'love', 'good', 'beauty', 'sense', 'virtue', 'heart', 'mind', and so forth, as well as the lexical meanings of them, which Fielding seems to use with great care and interest in his comedies, because these words seem contextually and statistically important throughout the twelve comedies, and because they seem to express his thoughts of life and of the world of men and women.

I am sorry to say, however, that in this essay I am going to treat only the words in his first comedy *Love in Several Masques*, which was written in 1728 when he was twenty-one years old, for want of space and time.

II. Love in Several Masques

(1) Love (n.)

In this comedy the word 'love' is the most important, as the title of *Love in Several Masques* tells.

(ex. 1) Merital. ...The birth of *love* is the birth of happiness, nay, even of life. To breathe without it is to drag on a dull, phlegmatic, insipid being, and struggle imperfect in the womb of nature.[1] (Act I., Scene I.)

I think that what is meant by this example underlies all the comedies of Fielding, but I cannot tell what kinds of love the word 'love' means. If the 'birth' in 'The birth of love' is emphasized, the 'love' may be natural affection 'arising from recongition of attractive qualities, from instincts of natural relationship, or from sympathy',[2] because I think that 'The birth of' limits the area of the meaning of the word 'love'. The word 'love' that Fielding uses in this comedy contains the meanings ranging from 'licentious' to 'Platonic', so unless we are careful of the context, we will misunderstand its meaning, or we will not be able to understand it well.

(ex. 2) Merital. But, Lady Matchless, what would you say to a lover who should address himself to your reason, and try to convince you of the principal end in the formation of woman, and the benefits of matrimony: from the lights of nature and religion desclose to you the system of platonic *love*, and draw his pretensions from his wisdom, and his arguments from his philosophy?

Lady Matchless. If he had more philosophy than *love*, I should advise him to seek his cure from that. But if he had more *love* than philosophy--Mercy upon him! (Act II., Scene XI.)

The phrase 'platonic love' is, needless to say, 'love or affection for one of the opposite sex, of a purely spiritual character, and free from sensual desire'.[3] But I cannot tell whether the word 'love' that Lady Matchless says means 'platonic love' or the 'love' in (ex. 1), that is, natural affection. Probably it means the latter. Lady Matchless says that 'if he had

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(1) The italics in the example and in the following ones are all mine.

(2) See 'Love', sb. 4. in the *OED.*

(3) See 'Platonic' adj. 2. in the *OED.*

more philosophy than love, I should advise hime to seek his cure from that', but if she really knows the original meaning of the word 'philosophy', it is strange that she should separate 'philosophy' from 'love', because its original meaning is 'The love, study, or pursuit of wisdom, or of knowledge of things and their causes, whether theoretical or practical'.[4] True, she is 'the greatest beauty, and the greatest wit'[5], but it seems to me that Fielding wants to describe a woman or lady who is ignorant of the real meanings of 'philosophy' and 'love' and that he wants to say to her, "I should advise you to seek your cure from that".

(ex. 3) Malvil. A reflection on your own conduct, madam, will justify every part of mine, but my *love*.

Vermilia. Name not that noble passion. A savage is as capable of it as thou art. And do you tax me with my *love* to Merital. He has as many virtues as thou hast blemishes. (Act III., Scene I.)

Malvil thinks that his love is pure, but Vermilia doesn't; she thinks it is far from pure, so she says to him, "Name not that noble passion." She wants to tell him that his love is ignoble, whereas she thinks her love to Merital is noble. I think, however, it is not always pure, because she is now conscious of 'love' in the relations between her and Malvil, between her and Merital, and Malvil and Merital.

(ex. 4) Vermilia. ..., dear Matchless, do not rally me on that subject (ie matrimony).

Lady Matchless. Is there any subject fitter for raillery? the wise, you know, have always made a jest of *love*.

Vermilia. Yes, and *love* has made a jest of the wise, who seem to have no other quarrel to *it*, but that they are the least successful in *it*.

Lady Matchless. Nay, if you are an advocate for *love*. I shall think--

Vermilia. What?

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(4) The *OED*'s definition of 'philosophy'.

(5) The description of her in Act IV., Scene X.

Lady Matchless. That you are in *love.*

Vermilia. Well, you are a censorious, ill-natured, teasing--

Lady Matchless. Don't be out of humour, child. I tell you the fellow's your own. (Act III., Scene IV.)

All the four words of 'love' and its two pronouns mean 'the affection which subsists between lover and sweetheart and is the normal basis of marriage'.[6] Both Lady Matchless and Vermilia are speakihg ironically of the wise.

(ex. 5) Lady Matchless. O, we shall never outshine the court of France, till Lord Formal is at the head of *les affaires de beau-monde.*

Lord Formal. Your ladyship's compliments are such an inundation, that they hurry the weak return of mine down the stream. But, really, I have been at some pains to inculcate principles of good-breeding, and laid down some rules concerning distance, submission, ceremonies, laughing, sighing, ogling, visits, affronts, respect, pride, *love.* (Act III., Scene VI.)

Good-breeding is to know distance, submission, ceremonies, laughing, sighing, ogling, visits, affronts, respect, pride, love, but what is the 'love'? and what does it mean? It seems to me that the word has every kind of meaning ranging from 'licentious' to 'platonic', because, if to offer 'affronts' to somebody is regarded as one of the principles of good-breeding, the word 'love', I think, must have not only a simple meaning such as natural affection, but also a complicated and bad meaning such as licentiousness. What seems meaningful concerning it is that it is the last principle of good-breeding.

(ex. 6) Merital. Consider, madam, you are in my power; remember your declaration. I had your *love* from your own dear lips. Consider well the temptation of so much beauty, the height of my offered joys, the time, the place, and the violence of my passion. Think of this, madam, and you can expect no other than that I

(6) The *OED*'s definition of 'Love' sb. 4.

should this moment seize on all my transports.

Lady Trap. If you should--Heaven forgive you.

Merital. (*Louder still.*) Yet, to convince you of my generosity, you are at your liberty. I will do nothing without your consent.

Lady Trap. Then to show you what a confidence I repose in your virtue, I vow to grant whate'er you ask.

Merital. (*Very loud.*) And to show you how well I deserve that confidence, I vow never to tempt your virtuous ears with *love* again; but, try, by your example, to reduce licentious passion to pure Platonic *love.* (Act III., Scene XIII.)

The word 'love' in the second line of the example seems to have the meaning of 'voluptuousness', while the word 'love' in the last line but one seems difficult to know what kind of love it means, but we can easily find the answer in the next line: it means 'licentious passion'. It is a typical word whose meanings go from one extreme (ie 'licentious') to the other (ie 'pure Platonic'). If Merital only said, "I vow never to tempt your virtuous ears with love again", that is, if he did not say any more than that, the meaning of the word 'love' would be ambiguous.

(ex.7) Servant. A letter, sir.

Wisemore. (*Reads.*)

"Sir, --You, who are conscious of being secretly my rival in the midst of an intimate friendship, will not be surprised when I desire that word may be cancelled between us, and that you would not fail me to-morrow at seven in Hyde Park.

"Your injured,

"Malvil."

What can this mean? Ha! here's a postscript.

"P.S. Your poor colourings of *love* for another woman, which you put on this morning, has confirmed, not baffled, my suspicion. I am certain you had no mistress to meet at Lady Matchless's but Vermilia."

Who brought this letter?

Servant. A porter, who said it required no answer.

Wisemore. What am I to think? am I in a dream? or was this writ in one? Sure madness has possessed the world, and men, like the limbs of a tainted body, universally share the infection. What shall I do! to go is to encounter a madman, and yet I will. Some strange circumstance may have wrought this delusion, which my presence may dissipate. And, since *love* and jealousy are his diseases, I ought to pity him, who know by dreadful experience.

When *love* in an impetuous torrent flows,
How vainly reason would its force oppose;
Hurled down the stream, like Flowers before the wind,
She leaves to love the empire of the mind. (Act III., Scene XVI.)

All of the three words except the verb 'love' in the last line mean a man's love for a woman, and since Wisemore says 'since love and jealousy are his diseases', it must have a bad meaning, at least, to him. In the poem 'love' is in contrast with 'reason'. I think 'love' is one good, dynamic extreme of human feelings and that 'reason' is one good, static extreme, and, to put it concretely, the former is Malvil, and the latter Wisemore, while 'She' means Vermilia, and 'the empire of the mind' means a man or his body or, more exactly, Malvil. If we read the poem as such, 'love' is, in this case, superior to 'reason'.

(ex. 8) Lady Matchless. I do pity you, indeed, for sure, to be in *love*--

Wisemore. Is to be foolish, mad, miserable--To be in *love* is to be in hell.

Lady Matchless. Do you speak from experience, sir?

Wisemore. From sad experience--I have been in *love*--so monstrously in *love* that, like a bow overbent, I am now relaxed into an opposite extreme--and heartily hate your whole sex. (Act IV., Scene II.)

'To be in love is to be foolish, mad, miserable--To be in love is to be in hell.' This is

one of the thoughts of Wisemore who is a reasonable, philosophical man. It seems to me that Fielding wants to say such a man as Wisemore is unable to be in love, and that a man who is unable to be in love hates women, and that he thinks of the area of human feelings, that is, that of 'love and hate' and 'heaven and hell'.

(ex. 9) Wisemore. The serpent practises not half your wiles. He covers not his poison with the cloak of *love*. Like lawyers, you gild your deceit, and lead us to misery, whilst we imagine ourselves pursuing happiness.

Lady Matchless. Ha! ha! ha! piqued malice! You have lost an estate for want of money, and a mistress for want of wit.

Wisemore. Methinks, either of those possessions should be maintained by juster titles.--In my opinion, the only title to the first should be right, and to the latter, merit, *love*, and constance.

Lady Matchless. Ha! ha! ha! Then know, thou romantic hero, that right is a sort of knight-errant, whom we have long since laughed out of the world. Merit is demerit, constancy dulness, and *love* an out-of-fashion Saxon word, which no polite person understands. ...(Act Ⅳ., Scene Ⅱ.)

All the three words have different meanings. The first word 'love' means what covers something, especially, something bad and what deceives somebody, especially, somebody good; the second pure love; the third, judging from the context, licentious love. It seems that Fielding wants to describe Wisemore as a representative of the men who have pure love and Lady Matchless as one of the women who have licentious love.

(ex. 10) Lady Matchless. Ha, ha, ha! *love* and scandal are the best sweetners of tea.

Vermilia. The best embitterers, you mean; but, in my opinion, scandal is the sweetest of the two, and least dangerous.

Lady Matchless. *Love* is not so dangerous to our sex as you imagine. It is a warfare wherein we always get the better, if we manage prudently; men are perfect empty bullies in it; and, as a certain poet says--

"Swift to attack, and swift to run away." (Act Ⅳ., Scene Ⅺ.)

The 'love' that Lady Matchless thinks she has, generally speaking, bad meanings, as I have said in ex. 9. It is scandalous. The Lady who says "Swift to attack, and swift to run away" is a surprisingly vicious woman or rather a virtually virtuous woman.

(ex. 11) Lady Matchless. When we resolve revenge against our lovers that little rogue *Love* sits on his throne and laughs till he almost bursts.

Though ne'er so high our rage, the rogue will find
Some little, ticklish corner in the mind.
Work himself in, and make the virgin kind.
When next before her feet her lover lies,
All her resentment, in a moment, dies.
Then with a sigh the tender maid forgives,
And *love*'s the only passion that survives. (Act Ⅲ., Scene Ⅺ.)

The word 'Love' is defined in the *OED* as: '(With capital.) The personification of sexual affection; usu. masculine, and more or less identified with the Eros, Amos, or Cupid of classic mithology; formerly sometimes feminine, and capable of being identified with Venus'. The word 'love' in the last line is naturally a woman's love for a man in this context.

(ex. 12) Malvil. And lovers must nurse up feeble, infant hopes, till they grow big, and ripen into certain joys.

Wisemore. I will do so: for I have always looked on *love* as on a sea, whose latitude no one ever discovered; and therefore,

Like mariners, without the compass tost,
We may be near our port when we esteem it lost. (Act Ⅴ., Scene Ⅸ.)

What Malvil says has positive meanings, because he says 'nurse up', not 'give up'. Wisemore who has always had a negative attitude toward 'love' is beginning to change

his attitude and have a positive one, because, as I have said in ex. 9, he has always tried to seek nothing but pure love.

(2) Good (adj.)

(ex. 1) Malvil. The ladies are pretty even with us, for they have learned to value *good* qualities only in a gallant, and to look for nothing but an estate in a husband.

Rattle. These are rare sentiments in a platonic lover.

Merital. Well put. How can a man love, who has so ill an opinion of the sex? (Act I., Scene IV.)

What is a 'gallant'? One of its definitions in the *OED*[7] is: 'One who pays court to ladies, a ladies' man. Now somewhat *rare*. Also, a lover; in a bad sense, a paramour'. Which of the four types of men in the definition is the 'gallant'? I think that, judging from the context, it is a 'paramour'. What is a 'paramour', then? One of its definitions in the *OED*[8] is: 'An illicit or clandestine lover or mistress taking the place, but without the rights, of a husband or wife'. What are the 'good' qualities only in a gallant such as a man who is defined as such? The word 'good' does not, I think, mean literally 'good' but 'bad'. What kinds of ladies are they, then, who 'have learned to value good qualities in a gallant'? It is very difficult to answer the question succinctly and relevantly.

(ex. 2) Lord Formal. Why, I'll tell you how I do. By going to a bookseller's shop once a month, I know the titles and authors of all the new books: so when I name one in company, it is, you know, of consequence supposed I have read it: immediately some lady pronounces sentence, either favourable, or not, according as the fame of the author and her ladyship's cards run high or low,--then *good* manners enrol me in her opinion.

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(7) See 'Gallant' sb. 3. in the *OED*.

(8) See 'Paramour' sb. 3. in the *OED*.

Merital. A very equitable court of justice truly.

Lord Formal. Reading, sir, is the worst thing in the world for the eyes;... (Act I., Scene V.)

'Going to a bookseller's shop once a month', 'knowing the titles and authors of all the new books', and 'naming one in company' are regarded by some lady as 'having read it' and, in consequence, as 'good manners'. This word 'good', generally speaking, may be literally 'good', but, since Lord Formal says that reading is the worst thing in the world for the eyes, Fielding himself, I think, does not really regard it as 'good'.

(ex. 3) Lady Matchless. ...but he is gone, and, I hope, to heaven.

Vermilia. That's a generous wish, my dear; and yet I believe it is the wish of many whose husbands deserve a worse place.

Lady Matchless. You mean, during the life of a bad husband; but those prayers then flow more from self-interest than generosity; for who would not wish her spouse in heaven, when it was the only way to deliver herself out of a hell?

Vermilia. True, indeed. But yours are the efforts of pure *good* nature; you pray for the happiness of your tyrant, now you are delivered out of his power.

Lady Matchless. Ah! poor man! since I can say nothing to his advantage, let him sleep in peace; my revenge shall not be on his memory, but his sex;... (Act II., Scene I.)

What Fielding as the writer thinks about ladies when he makes them talk to each other is, I think, naturally different from what he thinks about them when he observes them talking to each other. Vermilia says from her point of view as a lady that Lady Matchless's 'are the efforts of pure 'good' nature', but Fielding as the writer does not really think so, but that her nature is 'impure', 'ill' nature. This example is one in which, without the context, we cannot judge the real meaning of the word 'good' only by looking at it or only by its lexical meaning .

(ex. 4) Helena. To be sold! to be put up at auction! to be disposed of, as a piece of goods, by way of bargain and sale.

Lady Trap. Niece, niece, you are dealt with, as a piece of rich goods; you are to be disposed of at a high price; Sir Positive understands the world, and will make good conditions for you. You will have a young gentleman, and a pretty gentleman.

Helena. Yes; if a *good* estate can make a pretty gentleman.

Lady Trap. Sooner than a pretty gentleman can make a *good* estate. The pretty gentlemen of our age know better how to spend, than to get one.

Helena. Well, well, madam, my own fortune is sufficient to make the man I love happy. And he shall be one whose merit is his only riches, not whose riches are his only merit. (Act II., Scene V.)

All the three words mean literally 'good', and do not have any particular, complicated, ironical meanings. It seems to me that Fielding wants to emphasize that women who do not have any dream, ideal, and mental wealth will be interested in something realistic, such as 'estate', 'fortune', and 'riches'.

(ex. 5) Merital. ...But, tell me, on what do you build your hopes of the widow?

Wisemore. On an opinion I have of her *good* sense and *good* nature. The first will prevent her favouring a fop, the latter may favour me.

Merital. And, pray, what foundation is your opinion of her *good* sense built on? If, as you just now seemed to think, the beaus are its supporters--it is a very very rotten one. (Act IV., Scene IX.)

All the three words mean literally 'good' from Wisemore's point of view of the widow (ie Lady Matchless), but Merital does not think so, because he says, "If,..., the beaus are its supporters (that is, the supporters of your opinion)--it (that is, your opinion) is a very rotten one." To say that it is a very rotten one is to say that the 'good' sense and the 'good' nature Wisemore says are not 'good', although he does not say explicitly that they are 'bad' sense and 'bad' nature. For this reason, the word 'good' in this dialogue

has a literally good meaning on one extreme and on the other has an implicitly bad meaning.

(ex. 6) Sir Positive Trap. What then! Why, then there's the door, and then I desire you'd go out. Upstart, quotha! Sir Positive Trap an upstart! I had rather be called knave.[9] I had rather be the first rogue of a *good* family, than the first honest man of a bad one. (Act V., Scene VI.)

In this context it is obvious that 'knave' means 'the rogue of a good family' and 'upstart' 'the honest man of a bad one', and since Sir Positive Trap is a man who always feels pride in coming of a good family, the word 'good' may have a literal meaning, but, if we change our points of view of 'a good family', it will become the object of contempt. Therefore, it may have a double meaning of partly 'good' and of partly 'bad'. It is very difficult to make a conclusive remark on its meaning.

(ex. 7) Wisemore. ...My name is Wisemore.

Sir Positive Trap. Wisemore! Wisemore! Why, it is a *good* name--but I thought that family had been extinct.--Well, cousin, I am glad to see you have not married a snuff-box.

Lady Matchless. To perfect the *good* humour of the company, and since dinner is not yet ready, I'll entertain you with a song, which was sent me by an unknown hands,... (Act V., Scene *the last.*)

The first word 'good' may have an ironical meaning, because Sir Positive Trap calls Wisemore a snuff-box ; not only because of this, but because most of the names of characters in Fielding's plays are odd names, such as 'Positive Trap', 'Matchless' as well as 'Wisemore', which, I think, probably means 'Be more wise', while the second 'good' has, no doubt, a literal, original meaning as a set phrase.

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(9) cf. The *OED*'s definition of 'Knave' sb. 3. is: 'An unprincipled man, given to dishonourable and deceitful practices; a base and crafty rogue'.

(3) Beauty

(ex. 1) ...when a Raphael's masterpiece has been,
By the astonished judge, with rapture seen;
Should some young artist next his picture show.
He speaks his colours faint, his fancy low;
Though it some *beauties* has, it still must fall.
Compared to that, which has excell'd in all. (Prologue)

This example is one of the description of the impression a judge receives when he compares a Raphael's masterpiece with a picture of some young artist, and the word 'beauties' probably has a literal meaning of 'such perfect things of form and charming things of colouring as afford keen pleasure to the sense of sight'.[10] But it seems to me that, in fact, Fielding wants to say that *Love in Several Masques,* though it is his maiden work, shows a little originality in it, compared with, for example, a Shakespeare's masterpiece.

(ex. 2) Merital. And again, others (ie other celebrated toasts) be neglected who have every charm but wealth. In short, *beauty* is now considered as a qualification only for a mistress, and fortune for a wife. (Act I., Scene IV.)

The word 'beauty' means general beauty in the human face or figure. It is, I think, the same as 'beauty' in 'Beauty is but skin deep': what is outward, not what is inward; what becomes ugly as both a mistress and a wife grow old.

(ex. 3) Helena. Youth, madam, always will put age out of countenance in *beauty,* as age will youth in wisdom; therefore pray, aunt, don't you pretend to the one, and I'll resign all pretensions to the other.

Lady Trap. Do you think you have so much *beauty* then, miss?

Helena. I think I have enough to do so small an execution;... (Act II., Scene V.)

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(10) This is my adaptation of the *OED*'s definition of 'Beauty' sb. I.1.

Helena thinks that youth is to beauty what age is to wisdom, but isn't it better to think that youth is to beauty what age is to ugliness? If age is wisdom, isn't youth folly which is contrary in meaning to wisdom? But youth is not always folly, but immaturity in feelings and thoughts. When Fielding writes that youth is beauty, probably he thought that youth is not always beauty, and also when he writes that age is wisdom, probably he thought that age is not always wisdom. But, since neither ugliness contrary to beauty nor folly contrary to wisdom has any good meaning, probably he did not say anything about them.

(ex. 4) Lady Trap. Ha! I am alone, in the dark, a bedchamber by, if you should attempt my honour, who knows what the frailty of my sex may consent to? Or, if you should force me, am I, poor weak woman, able to resist? Ay, but then there is law and justice; yet you may depend too fatally on my good nature.

Merital. Consider, madam, you are in my power; remember your declaration. I had your love from your own dear lips. Consider well the temptation of so much *beauty,* the height of my offered joys, the time, the place, and the violence of my passion....(Act III., Scene X III.)

The word 'beauty' in this example means that of the frailty of her sex, of a poor weak woman, of being unable to resist, and of her good nature.

(ex. 5) Lady Trap. You seem to know, madam, I think, more than is consistent with your years.

Helena. And you seem to practice, madam, more than is consistent with yours. The theory becomes my age much better than the practice does yours.

Lady Trap. Your age! marry come up! you are always boasting of that youth and *beauty* which you have.

Helena. That's more excusable than to boast of that youth and *beauty* which we have not.

Lady Trap. I know whom you reflect on.--I think my stars, indeed, I am no girl; and as for *beauty,* if my glass be allowed a judge--

Helena. A very corrupt judge: for a glass is so well-bred a thing, that it tells

every woman she is a *beauty*. O! it is the greatest flatterer in the world to our faces; but the reverse in one thing, for it never disparages us behind our backs. (Act V., Scene II.)

All the three words but the last mean the 'beauty' which women think they naturally have. The last means, needless to say, a 'beautiful woman' from this context, but the meaning area of the word 'beautiful' is that ranging from 'most beautiful' to 'ugliest', as the proverb says: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." 'Beauty does not exist by itself; it exists only in the consciousness of those who see it.' (11)

(4) Sense

(ex. 1) Merital. Did you not see the Lady Matchless last night? What ecstasies did she impart, even at a distance, to her beholder!

Malvil. A beautiful, rich, young widow, in a front box, makes as much noise as a blazing star in the sky; draws as many eyes on her, and is as much criticised on in the polite world as the other in the learned. With what envious glances was she attacked by the whole circle of belles! and what amorous ones by the gentlemen proprietors of the toupet, snuff-box, and sword-knot!

Merital. Nor could all this elevate her to the least pride or haughtiness, but she carried it with an air not conscious of the envy and adoration she contracted .That becoming modesty in her eyes! that lovely, easy sweetness in her smile! that gracefulness in her mien! that nobleness, without affectation, in her looks! in short, that one complete charm in her person! Such a woman as this does as much mischief amongst the men of *sense*!--

Malvil. As some beaus do amongst the women of none. (Act I., Scene I.)

The word 'sense' has no literal meaning of 'Natural understanding, intelligence, esp. as

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(11) This is an explanation about the proverb in *English Proverbs Explained* by Ronald Ridont & Clifford Witting p. 28.

bearing on action or behaviour; practical soundness of judgment'.[12] I think it means the same as 'none' in 'the women of none', and so 'men of sense' must be an ironical descriptio of 'men of none'.

(ex. 2) Merital. But what hopes can you have of succeeding against the multitude which swarm in her drawing-room?

Rattle. Pugh! Tom, you know I have succeeded against great multitudes before now--and she is a woman of excellent *sense* (ie Lady Matchless). (Act I., Scene III.)

It is true that Lady Matchless is a woman of sense, as we have known her in ex. 1, but, in fact, Fielding himself may not regard her as a woman of excellent sense, literally. It seems to me that he wants to say that hers is outer, exterior, external, or outward sense, not inner, interior, internal, or inward sense.

(ex. 3) Vermilia. There is a more dangerous, though a more ridiculous fool than any of these, and that is a fine gentleman, who becomes the disguise of a lover worse than any you have named.

Lady Matchless. O, ay; a man of *sense* acts a lover just as a Dutchman would a herlequin. He stumbles at every straw we throw in his way, which a fop would skip over with ease. (Act II., Scene I.)

The word 'sense' in this example, I think, means the same as that in ex. 1, because, if a man has true sense, he cannot stumble at every straw.

(ex. 4) Merital. You might justly say, he had more love than reason.

Vermilia. Why do you attempt then to persuade us into so despicable an opinion of your reason?

Merital. Malvil says, that's the surest way to your love; and that the lower we are in your opinion of our *sense* the higher we are in your favour. He compares

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(12) The *OED*'s definition of 'Sense' sb. 11.

those to two scales, of which as the one rises the other falls (Act II., Scene XI.)

This word 'sense', I think, has the same meaning as the above-mentioned definition of the *OED*. The 'sense' women think of seems essentially different from that men think of. The former must be outer sense ; the latter inner.

(5) Virtue

(ex. 1) Lord Formal. Why truly I have had as many temptations as any man. But I have ever laid it down as a maxim, that a wife should be very rich. Men who do not know the world will talk of *virtue* and beauty. Now, in my opinion, *virtue* is so scarce, it is not worth the looking after ; and beauty so common, it is not worth the keeping. (Act I., Scene V.)

'Virtue' is defined in the *OED* as: 'Conformity of life and conduct with the principles of morality ; voluntary observance of the recognized moral laws or standards of right conduct ; abstention on moral grounds from any form of wrong-doing or vice'. In the example, I think the second definition is contextually good. Fielding makes Lord Formal say, "Men who do not know the world will talk of virtue and beauty", but I think there are the other expressions concerning 'men' 'the world' 'virtue' 'beauty': (1) Men who do not know the world will not talk of virtue and beauty ; (2) Men who know the world will not talk of virtue and beauty ; (3) Men who know the world will talk of virtue and beauty. 'Men' of whom Lord Formal thinks are probably those whose theory does not go hand in hand with their practice, that is, philosophers, in a bad sense. 'Men' in (1) are those who are ignorant of the world, virtue, beauty, and every other thing, and who, in a sense, are innocent. 'Men' in (2) are those who are negative, pessimistic, or static, probably because they are those who think human nature bad: sages or saints are one example of them. 'Men' in (3) are those who are positive, optimistic, or dynamic, and whom we desire in the world. Now, Lord Formal goes on to say, "Now, in my opinion, virtue is so scarce, it is not worth the looking after; and beauty so common, it is not worth the keeping", but in my opinion, virtue is so scarce, it is worth the looking after ; and beauty so common, it

is worth the keeping.

(ex. 2) Wisemore. Ay, in that town (ie London), that worst of wilderness! where follies spread like thorns; where men act the part of tigers, and women of crocodiles; where vice lords it like a lion, and *virtue,* that phoenix, is so rarely seen, that she is believed a fable--... (Act Ⅳ., Scene Ⅱ.)

Wisemore seems to deplore the present condition of that town where vice lords it like a lion, and virtue, that phoenix, is so rarely seen, but he is not in despair, because he regards virtue as 'phoenix'. According to the *OED,* 'phoenix' is defined as: 'A mythical bird, of gorgeous plumage, fabled to be the only one of its kind, and to live five or six hundred years in the Arabian desert, after which it burnt itself to ashes on a funeral pile of aromatic twigs ignited by the sun and fanned by its own wings, but only to emerge from its ashes with renewed youth, to live through another cycle of years'. Fielding believes that Virtue, which is immortal like the phoenix, will emerge some day from the vicious town with renewed youth, though vice now seems to lord it like a lion over the town.

(ex. 3) Vermilia. And, pray, what has caused this sudden revolution in your temper, since, if I am not mistaken, you, but yesterday, expressed some favour for him (ie a troublesome lover)?

Lady Matchless. But I have found him such an out-of-fashion creature that I am heartily ashamed of him; besides, I have this morning received proposals from that prince of pretty fellows--Lord Formal.

Vermilia. O constancy! thou art a *virtue.*

Lady Matchless. *It* is indeed. For *virtues,* like saints, are never canonised till after they are dead--which poor Constancy has been long ago.

Vermilia. I am afraid *it* proved abortive, and died before *it* was born. But, if *it* ever had being, *it* was most certainly feminine; and, indeed, the men have been so modest to allow all the *virtues* to be of our sex.

Lady Matchless. O! we are extremely obliged to them; they have found out housewifery to belong to us too. In short, they throw their families and their

hounour into our care, because they are unwilling to have the trouble of preserving them themselves. (Act Ⅳ., Scene Ⅺ.)

The word 'virtue' or virtues' in this example, I think, has ironical meanings, because having received proposals is not really a virtue, or because not having received them is really a virtue. When Vermilia says, "I am afraid it proved abortive, and died before it was born", it seems to me that she wants to say, or, more exactly, Fielding wants to say, that the women have originally no virtue, but that the men make the women have a virtue or virtues.

(6) Heart

(ex. 1) Lady Matchless. Come, come, you would have more modern notions if you knew that a certain woman of fortune has some kind thoughts of you ; and, I assure you, I am not what I seem.

Wisemore. Faith, madam, I should not. Grandeur is to me nauseous as a gilded pill, and fortune, as it can never raise my esteem for the possessor, can never raise my love. My *heart* is no place of mercenary entertainment, nor owns more than one mistress. *Its* spacious rooms are all, all hers who slights and despises *it*. Yes, she has abandoned me, and I will abandon myself to despair ; so, pray, leave me to it, for such as you have no business with the unhappy. (Act Ⅳ., Scene Ⅱ.)

The word 'heart', I think, has two meanings: one as a place, or, more exactly, as the bodily organ ; the other as the seat of one's inmost thoughts and secret feelings. When Wisemore says, "My heart does not own more than one mistress", the 'heart' has naturally a figurative meaning, so does the 'heart' (ie 'it' in the example) which she slights and despises.

(7) Mind

(ex. 1) Merital. ...my mistress is made up of natural spirit, wit, and fire ; all these she has improved by an intimate conversation with plays, poems, romances, and such gay studies, by which she has acquired a perfect knowledge of the polite

world without ever seeing it, and turned the confinement of her person into the enlargement of her *mind.* ...(Act Ⅰ., Scene Ⅰ.)

(ex. 2) Vermilia. O what a profusion was there of sighs, vows, prayers, oaths, tears, and curses!--And so you are fled to London as a place of security against love-debts? I know now why it is, but certainly a woman is the least liable to play the fool here; perhaps the hurry of diversions and company keep the *mind* in too perpetual a motion to let it fix on one object. Whereas, in the country our ideas are more fixed and more romantic. Courts and cities have few heroes or heroines in love. (Act Ⅱ., Scene Ⅰ.)

(ex. 3) Lady Matchless. ...A lover, when he is admitted to cards, ought to be solemnly silent, and observe the motions of his mistress. He must laugh when she laughs, sigh when she sighs. In short, he should be the shadow of her *mind.* A lady, in the presence of her lover, should never want a looking-glass; as a beau, in the presence of his looking-glass, never wants a mistress. (Act Ⅱ., Scene Ⅺ.)

(ex. 4) Merital. ...I believe women very seldom take matrimony for a penance.

Wisemore. You draw too direct inference from her conduct towards coxcombs. Depend on it, they are mirrors, in which you can hardly discover the *mind* of a woman of sense, because she seldom shows it them unmasqued. If she be not a woman of sense, I have, indeed, built a castle in the air, which every breeze of perfumes can overturn. (Act Ⅳ., Scene Ⅸ.)

Each word 'mind' in the four examples has the same meaning as 'The seat of a person's consciousness, thoughts, volitions, and feelings; ...,the spiritual part of a human being; the soul as distinguished from the body';[13] in short, it means what is the essence of a human being. In three of the four examples, strangely enough, the delicateness of a woman's mind is described.

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(13) 'Mind', sb. 17. in the *OED.*

(ex. 5) Wisemore *(alone.)* How vain is human reason, when philosophy cannot overcome our passion! when we can see our errors, and yet pursue them. But if to love be an error, why should great *minds* be the most subject to it? No, the first pair enjoyed it in their state of innocence, whilst error was unborn. (Act III., Scene XV.)

The word 'minds', I think, means persons 'regarded abstractly as the embodiment of mental qualities (thought, feelings, disposition, etc.)'[14] and in this context Fielding wants to say that they are philosophers who have in essence no ability, and whose theory does not go hand in hand with their practice.

So far we have considered the contextual or lexical meanings of each of the six words which I believe are essential in Fielding's comedies. But there are, I think, three more kinds of essential words of which I should treat : 'woman' or 'women', 'men', and 'philosophy'. In treating of them, it may be better to think that 'woman' or 'women' and 'men' play important parts as characters and that 'philosophy' is what is essential for Fielding to write his comedies and all his works than to regard each of the words only as 'word'.

(8) Woman or women

(ex. 1) Merital. *(Alone.)* Prince of coxcombs! 'sdeath! 'tis in the mouths of such fellows as these that the reputations of *women* suffer; for *women* are like books. Malice and envy will easily lead you to the detection of *their* faults; but *their* beauties good judgment only can discover and good nature relish. And *woman*, that noble volume of our greatest happiness,

Which to the wise affords a rich repast,
Fools only censure from their want of taste. (Act I., Scene VI.)

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(14) 'Mind', sb. 17.g. in the *OED.*

Merital thinks well of women, saying, "their beauties good judgment only can discover and good nature relish", and comparing the wise with fools. What Merital thimks, I think, is what Fielding really thinks.

(ex. 2) Wisemore. O nature, nature, why didst thou form *woman,* in beauty the masterpiece of creation, and give her a soul capable of being caught with the tinsel outside of such a fop as this! this empty, gaudy, nameless thing (ie Lord Formal)!

Lord Formal. Let me presume to tell you, that nameless thing will be agreeable to the ladies, in spite of your envy.

Wisemore. Madam, by all that's heavenly, I love you more than life; would I might not say, than wisdom. If it be not in my power to merit a return, let me obtain this grant, that you would banish from you these knaves, these vultures; wolves are more merciful than they....(Act Ⅲ., Scene Ⅷ.)

Wisemore thinks ill of woman (that is, female nature), or wants to say that it consists of foolishness or innocence. What Wisemore wants to say is, I think, what Fielding still wants to say.

(ex. 3) Lady Matchless. ...are you so conversant in the *beau-monde,* and don't know that *women,* like quicksilver, are never fixed till they are dead?

Rattle. Agad, they are more like gold, I think; for they are never fixed but by dross. (Act. Ⅴ., Scene Ⅹ.)[15]

Is it necessary to comment on this example?

(9) Men

(ex. 1) Lady Matchless. ...Give me your hand, Vermilia: take my word for it, child, the *men* are very silly creatures; therefore let us laugh at mankind,

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(15) cf. (7) Mind (ex. 2) (ex. 4)

And teach them, that, in spite of all their scorn,
Our slaves they are, and for our service born. (Act III., Scene XII.)

(ex. 2) Lady Trap. *(Aside.)* What fools *men* are to make bustles about particular women, when they know not one from another in the drak? (Act III., Scene XIII.)

How ill-natured of Fielding it is to permit Lady Matchless or Lady Trap to say that men are our slaves and are born for our service, and what fools men are...! What a good knowledge of human nature he had, although he was only twenty-one yoars old when he wrote *Love in Several Masques!*

(10) Philosophy

(ex. 1) Merital. ...in town we look on none to be so great a fool as a philosophor, and there is no fool so out of fashion.

Wisemore. A certain sign fools are in fashion. *Philosophy* is a true glass, which shows the imperfections of the mind as plain as the other of the body; and no more than a true glass can be agreeable to a town constitution. (Act I (Act I., Scene II.)

From the context, philosophy, it seems to me, is the basis of knowledge and of thought and it is the birth of life.

III. Conclusion

We have considered ten words and the part each of them plays in the context. When we observe it with care, we find that the words 'mind' and 'heart' are the ones which mean respectively the essence of a human being and the centre of a human being; the words 'beauty' 'virtue' 'sense' are the ones which mean adjectival qualities, that is, 'beautiful' 'virtuous' 'sensible'; the word 'love' is the one which means a verbal quality; the word 'good,' is the one which means one of the bases of things, that is, the good, the true, the

beautiful and which describes human nature. What Fielding wants to describe by means of these words, I think, must be human beings and human nature, although he uses each of them ironically, literally, or reversely. He wants to create human beings who have the mind and the heart, who are endowed with beauty, virtue and sense, and who have true love for everything good, especially, good nature.

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